

CHINESE PLAYMATES



By
NORMAN H. PITMAN

Pitman
Chinese playmates

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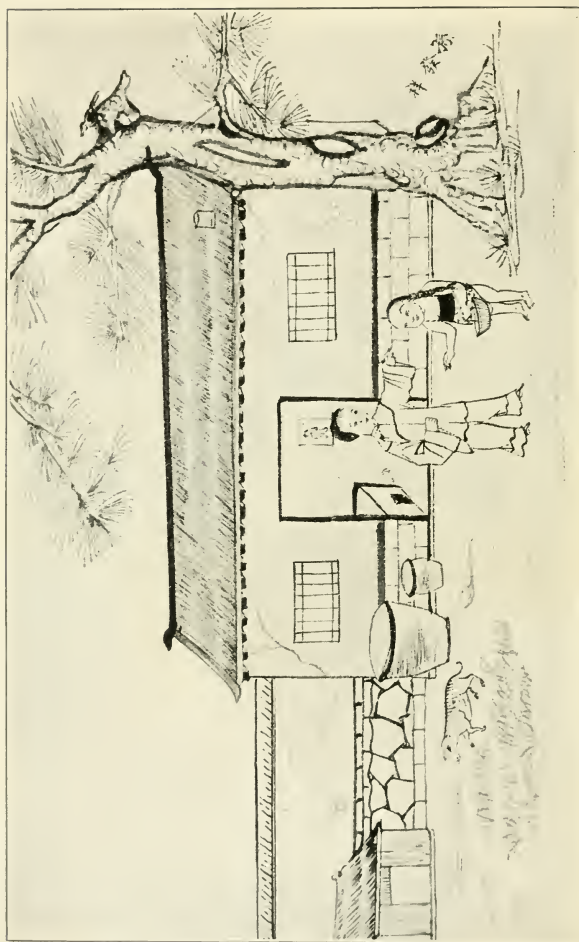
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CHINESE PLAYMATES



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L^o-LO AT HOME

CHINESE PLAYMATES

OR THE BOY GLEANERS

BY

NORMAN H. PITMAN

Author of "Chinese Fairy Stories," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
SEN FAH SHANG

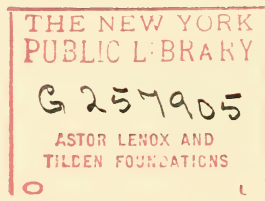


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TO
Elizabeth, Katherine, and Francis Keiper
This Book
IS DEDICATED

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CHAPTER I

A STRANGE PET

LO-LO was standing at the gate looking out into the narrow street to see if one of his little friends was in sight. In his hand he held a tiny cage made of narrow strips of wood. From this box there came now and then an odd sound, which seemed to be like the noise made by a cricket. At last as Lo-Lo gazed down the dusty road he saw a small boy coming up. It was his best friend.

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"Here, Ta-Ta," he called, "come here. I have a new pet to show you."

"What is it?" cried Ta-Ta, starting to run as he saw Lo-Lo holding up the little box.

"What do you think?"

But just then the new pet began to sing at the top of its shrill voice, and Ta-Ta shouted, "Oh, I know. It's a grasshopper; one that sings."

"Yes, you are right."

"Where did you get it?"

"Papa brought it home last night when he came from the field. He said a man passed by with a big basket just full of these cages, and each box had a hopper in it. Papa paid the man ten cash for it, and brought it home to me, box and all."

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“What are you going to do with it?”

“Oh, keep it and teach it tricks, I think,” said Lo-Lo proudly.

CHAPTER II

LO-LO'S HOUSE

“**L**O-LO,” called some one from the back of the small mud house, “come here at once. I have work for you to do.”

“It is mamma. You hold the box,” said Lo-Lo to Ta-Ta, and the owner of the new pet placed the box in the other’s hand and ran into the house.

The house where Lo-Lo lived had only one room. The walls were built of mud, and the roof was made of grass and mud. It was very dark inside this dwelling. All the way across one side of the

room a bed was built. It was made of mud brick. In the front wall of this bed was a small oven in which a fire might be started when the weather was cold. As Lo-Lo's parents were poor, they could not have a fire except during the feast times at the New Year. Many and many a long winter night Lo-Lo had lain cuddled up close to his mother, while the icy wind blew through the cracks in the door. Many a time his poor little toes were bitten by the cruel frost.

"Mamma, why don't you make a fire in the bed?" he would whisper.

"Because we are too poor, my boy." Then she would take a blanket that had been wrapped

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about her own body, and put it around Lo-Lo.

Near the door of Lo-Lo's house was a square stove built of brick. The top of this stove was hollowed out so that a large iron kettle fitted in tightly just above the fire. In the front of this brick stove was a square hole like the one in the front of the bed. Here a fire was made of leaves, straw, weeds, or roots, for these people had neither coal, wood, nor gas, to burn.

Over the fireplace, pasted on the wall, was the soiled picture of a man whom the people in China call the Kitchen God.

A dog was lying in one corner of the room. His head was resting on a paper covered with sun-

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flower seed, which Lo-Lo's mother had spread out to dry. The Chinese think that sunflower seed is very good to eat.

CHAPTER III

A WEED HUNT

“**L**O-LO,” said his mother, when he came in, “you must put away your pet, for I want you to run and get me a basket of weeds. Hurry back. Your papa will be here soon, and I must cook some supper.”

“All right, I’ll be back soon.”

“Come on, Ta-Ta,” shouted the boy, happy at the chance to go on the street; “come along and help me pull weeds.”

“All right. You carry the basket, and I’ll carry the hopper.”

“But mamma said to put the hopper away.”



THE SWEET POTATO MAN

“Oh, she won’t care. Let’s take it.”

Finally Lo-Lo agreed, and the two walked along the ill-smelling narrow street. Their hearts were full of joy.

At the first corner a man was selling sweet potatoes and a kind of Chinese fruit. Each potato was stuck on a small stick which ran out from a pole he carried in his hand. “My, how good they must be!” said Lo-Lo. “Wish I had a bite. I have not had a taste since last year.”

“Huh!” laughed Ta-Ta, “we have them at our house often. I like sea slugs much better.”

Soon the two boys reached an open field where the yellow wheat stretched out as far as they could

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see. On the bank by the roadside they could see dry weeds sticking out of the ground.

"Here is what we're after," exclaimed Lo-Lo, full of glee. "It won't take long to get a basket of weeds here."

So the boys set to work digging weeds from the hard dry soil.

"I don't see why other people haven't dug these up before now," put in Ta-Ta.

"Well, you see," explained Lo-Lo wisely, "these have dried up during the past day or two. The sun has been so hot, and there has been no rain. Nearly all the women and the children have been out in the wheat fields pulling the wheat. They have had no time to gather weeds."

CHAPTER IV

THE HOPPER HOPS AWAY

“LET’S go home now,” said Lo-Lo. “We have a good load, and mamma told me to hurry back.”

He picked up the basket. By this time it was quite full of sun-dried weeds, which would make good fuel for the brick fireplace. Ta-Ta stooped to take up the little box that had held the pet grasshopper. With a cry of dismay, he shouted, “It is gone! The little hopper is out. It crawled through the bars.”

Just then they saw the pet insect give a great spring from the

weeds at their feet. It landed on top of the bank.

“Quick, quick! grab it!” yelled Lo-Lo.

Both boys jumped up the bank. Lo-Lo still held tightly on to his basket, and Ta-Ta on to his empty box. By this time the spry little creature was well out of their reach, and, with a loud song of delight at being free once more, hopped over into the high wheat.

“Oh, it’s gone, it’s gone,” wailed Lo-Lo, “and it was such a pretty one. I’ll never, never have another! If we only hadn’t taken it away from home! Papa said I must take good care of it, for he did not have any more money to waste on such small birds.”



L O-LO AND TA-TA

CHAPTER V

THE FOREST OF GRAIN

“IT’S not lost yet. What are you talking about?” said Ta-Ta, after they had stared at each other blankly for a brief while. “Just put your basket down in the wheat there where no one can see it from the road. We will run after the hopper and find it in five minutes.”

“But I told mamma I would hurry back, so she could make the fire to cook supper.”

“Five minutes is no matter, and besides, you know she wouldn’t want you to lose your hopper the first day you had it.”

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"Yes, that's so," answered Lo-Lo after a slight pause, "for she likes it 'most as well as I do, says it sings loud enough to keep her from being lonesome."

"There it is right now," exclaimed Ta-Ta, just as they stepped in among the wheat stalks. "You go that way and I'll go this. We'll soon have Mr. Hopper back in his cage."

Without waiting longer, Lo-Lo set down his load and plunged into the wheat field. It seemed to the boy of seven almost like going out into a grove of mighty trees, for the stalks of grain rose several inches above his head and he could see only a few feet in front of him.

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“There it goes,” called Ta-Ta, who, by this time, was out of sight. “Catch it! catch it! Don’t you hear it singing?”

CHAPTER VI

JUST BEHIND

LO-LO was now so excited that he did not know what he was doing or where he was going. Blindly he stumbled over the rough clods. Sometimes the wheat blades scratched his bare legs, and at any other moment he would have cried out with pain, but he did not make a sound now, for he had no time to think of himself.

In the distance he could hear Ta-Ta calling loudly every now and then, and this made Lo-Lo run all the faster, for Ta-Ta

seemed to be always within arm's length of the prize. No, it would never do for him to return home with an empty box, even though his basket was full of the dryest, nicest weeds in all China.

Once he thought he saw his pet. After many a fall in the dirt, he ended by seizing the lively insect in his hand. Oh, how sad he was on peeping at his captive to behold a common green locust of the kind that cannot sing! At first he thought of killing the helpless thing that had led him such a hot chase. But Lo-Lo was a good boy at heart and very kind. Instead of hurting the grasshopper he let it hop away, happy at having escaped from the human monster. No doubt Lo-Lo

looked like a giant to the harmless creature.

Once more he set out after the little singer that his father had given him, and which he loved so dearly. To the right and to the left he searched. He shook the yellow stalks as he passed between them, for he thought that, perhaps, his timid pet was hiding in the grain. Nowhere could he find a sign of it, and nowhere did he hear it sing.

CHAPTER VII

LOST

AT last, when Lo-Lo was worn out with the search, he fell in a heap upon the ground.

“Ta-Ta,” he cried, “where are you?”

But there was no reply, and the poor boy burst into tears.

“I want to go home,” he moaned; “I want to go home.”

The wind blew gently against his wet cheeks. The sun had set and it had begun to grow dark. Oh, if his papa would only come out and find him, how happy he would be! Alas, how would his father know where to seek? On

leaving home Lo-Lo had not told his mother where he was going to hunt for weeds, and she would have no way of finding out where he was. He had even hidden his basket in the edge of the wheat, and his parents would have no trace of where he had left the road.

Now it was dark all around him. Far in the distance he could hear the barking of dogs and the braying of a mule. Even these well-known sounds were welcome to the lonely child, who shivered with dread at the thought of spending the night alone in the field.

Then, too, Lo-Lo began to feel hungry. He thought of the sunflower seed and warm food he



A SLEEP IN THE WHEAT

was to have eaten for his supper. How good it would have tasted! How could he have grown tired of such things? Never again would he cry because his mother would not give him potatoes such as Ta-Ta had. Where was Ta-Ta anyway? Most likely he, too, was lost in this great field.

The tears began to flow once more, and soon the tired little fellow was asleep.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LITTLE WOODEN CAGE

THE next morning, when Lo-Lo awoke, the sun was shining brightly in his face. For a few minutes, as he looked at the tall grain waving above him in the breeze, he could not think where he was. Could it be that he was dreaming? Then it all flashed through his mind: he was lost, and had spent his first night away from home and loved ones.

He sprang to his feet. There was an empty feeling in his stomach, and he felt very, very hungry. Reaching up, he grasped some of the heads of rough wheat

and broke them off. Surely it was not wrong for a hungry boy to take a little of the grain to keep himself from starving. Slowly he munched the juicy kernels. How good they tasted! Now, if he could only find some hot water to drink. But where was he to find it?

The best thing to do now, he thought, was to find his way out of the field and run home as fast as his legs would carry him. True, he had tried to find his way out the day before, and had failed, but he had been tired then. Now that he was fresh, it ought to be an easy matter to get back to the road, pick up his basket, and return home.

So Lo-Lo set out in what

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seemed to him the right way. On and on he plodded, until his legs grew tired, for a wheat field does not make the easiest walking, even for a grown man. By and by it seemed to him as if he had gone miles. Still there was no outlet. He turned to the right. That must be the way in which he had come.

Again he walked until he was tired. Just as he was about to sink to the ground his eyes fell upon a little object which he had seen many times before. He stooped and picked it up. It was the little box cage that Ta-Ta had carried the evening before, when they had first come into the field.

CHAPTER IX

A HAPPY MEETING

FOR a moment Lo-Lo could hardly believe his eyes. Could it be true that Ta-Ta was near-by?

Loudly he called. At first there was no answer, and then he thought he heard a faint reply. My! how he ran toward the spot from which had come the welcome voice of his friend.

"Where are you?" he shouted.

"Here," was the answer, and then, in another instant, they were clasping each other by the hand.

"Isn't it awful," said Ta-Ta in a whisper, "to be all alone at night?"

"Yes, and it's the first time in all my life that I have been away from home."

"Huh!" sniffed Ta-Ta, "once when my mamma went back to her old home, I went with her, and we had just lots and lots of good things to eat. My, but I'm so hungry now that I could eat mud bricks if I had any."

"Have you tried the wheat?" asked Lo-Lo.

"Yes, but it kept making me so thirsty that I had to stop. Come on. We've just got to find our way out of this. Let's go this way. The road must be over yonder."

So they started once more on their search for the border of the field. Since they had found each

other, things were not quite so bad as they had been before.

“What’s that?” whispered Ta-Ta all of a sudden, gripping Lo-Lo by the arm. “Something’s been sleeping in that spot. See! the wheat’s all smashed down, and there’s a place hollowed out in the ground. Maybe it’s a wild beast. I’m afraid, Lo-Lo. Aren’t you?”

Lo-Lo looked to where Ta-Ta pointed. “Ha, ha,” he laughed. “That’s the bed I slept on last night. Are you afraid of me, Ta-Ta? I have been walking all this time, and now am no nearer home than when I got up this morning.”

CHAPTER X

A STORY

BOTH boys laughed at Ta-Ta's fright. "That makes me think of a story papa told me," said Lo-Lo at last.

"What is it?" questioned the other. "Tell it."

"Well, when he was a very little boy, he said that his mamma used to scare him by telling him about an ugly fairy that followed bad children. The fairy lived in a deep well near the house where they lived."

"And did it ever catch him?" asked Ta-Ta, his eyes shining brightly.

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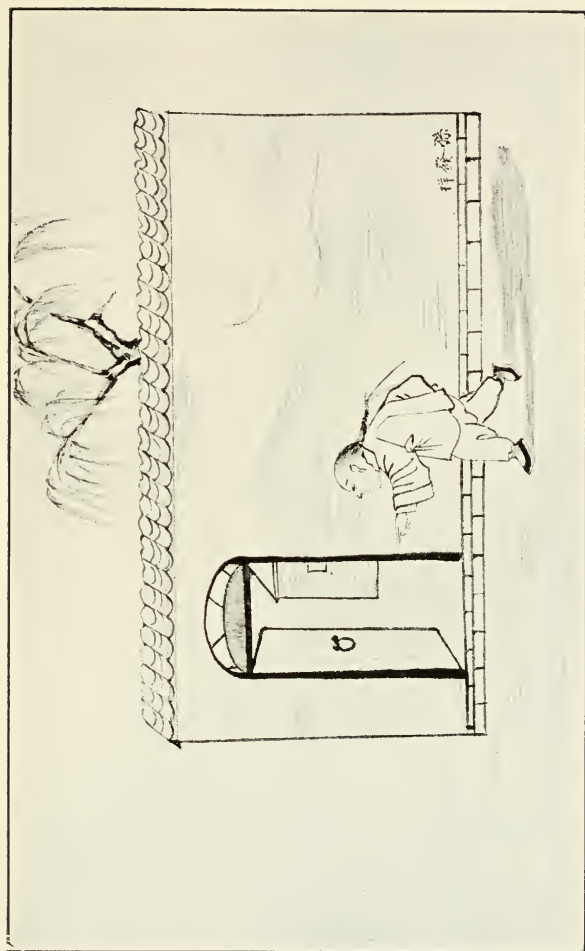
“You just wait till I get through. One day, when he was out in the street, a man came by, leading a pet bear. Papa had never seen one before, so he followed the man for a long way. Before he knew it, he was far from home. He knew he had been a bad boy to run away from home, and he started back as fast as his legs would carry him. You see his mamma had told him that the ugly fairy would get him if he was naughty.

“Soon he heard a noise behind him. He looked and saw something large and black coming close after him. He thought it was the big black fairy, and began to cry as hard as he could cry. My! how scared he was!

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He was afraid the thing would grab him any minute. He ran and ran until he reached home.

“When his mamma saw how frightened he was she laughed, and said, ‘Why, child, are you running from your own shadow?’”



“HE RAN AND RAN UNTIL HE REACHED HOME.”

CHAPTER XI

WELCOME VOICES

WHEN the boys had finished laughing at Lo-Lo's story they started once more to look for the edge of the field.

"This must be the biggest field in all China," said Lo-Lo, "for I walked and walked last night, but could not find the road."

"Maybe it's the largest in all the world," added Ta-Ta wisely.

"Isn't China the whole world? What do you mean, Ta-Ta?"

"Haven't you ever heard about the other land, where the big white men live, 'way over the

sea?" asked Ta-Ta, instead of replying to the question.

"No, and I don't even know what you mean by sea."

"A sea is lots and lots of water, more than a hundred rivers side by side; rivers that have water in them instead of just dry sand. These hundred rivers, all side by side, are much too wide for any rowboat to cross. A man told me that away, away over the sea there is another land where the people are white instead of yellow."

"My, how funny!" laughed Lo-Lo. "They must look like paper. Are they bad? Do they have heads? Are they rich or poor?"

"Yes, yes, very mean. Of course they have heads. What

kind of men would they be without heads? All of them live in great houses that look like temples, and they have as much money as the richest men you ever saw. But the funniest thing about them is that the women's feet are as big as the men's; sometimes bigger."

"Did you ever see one of these men?" asked Lo-Lo, his mouth wide open by this time.

"No, no, *I* haven't, but my uncle did once, and he said he saw them eat. He said it was more fun than seeing the Punch and Judy show."

By this time the boys had walked quite a way in a straight line, and were coming near the outskirts of the field.

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All at once Ta-Ta, whose ears were very keen, called out, "Hark! I hear voices. They are pulling the wheat. Come this way, and we'll soon be home again."



PULLING THE WHEAT

CHAPTER XII

A CHINESE HARVEST

THE boys began to run, and soon they heard the sound of many voices. A minute later, and they were in the midst of a busy scene. Twenty men were hard at work pulling up the wheat by the roots and piling it in little heaps. Others, who worked behind the wheat-pullers, were tying the grain into bundles.

Near the road a crowd of poor people were waiting for the man in charge of the field to give them the signal. Then they would have the right to gather any grain that had been left by the workers.

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These people are called gleaners. Sometimes they get very little grain from the fields, but in China the stalks of the wheat, and even the roots after they are dry are used for fuel. This explains why the Chinese pull their wheat instead of cutting it as we do in our country. In China all men who harvest wheat leave some for the poor to gather. If they did not do this, people would call them very mean men.

As soon as the man in charge of the field saw Lo-Lo and Ta-Ta coming out of the wheat he was very angry. He thought they had been pulling wheat before getting leave from him. "You little beggars!" he cried, running up to them, "What do

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you mean by going into that field before I tell you?"

Lo-Lo and Ta-Ta were too much frightened to talk. They trembled when the angry man spoke to them, but made no answer.

"Can't you talk?" he shouted, striking at them with a long whip.

Both boys jumped out of reach of the cruel lash, and tumbled head over heels down the bank on which the gleaners were lying.

CHAPTER XIII

THE OLD WOMAN

WHEN they got up, all the women and children were laughing at their mishap.

"Let's go home," said Lo-Lo.

"But which way is home?" asked Ta-Ta, weakly. "I don't believe I know."

The boys looked up and down the long winding road. There was not a thing in sight that they had seen before, not a house nor tree that they knew. They looked away from the road. Not a thing to see but wheat, wheat, wheat.

"Where do you live?" asked

one of the gleaners, an old woman, bending over them.

"In Li Ku Tan," said Ta-Ta, almost afraid to speak.

"Li Ku Tan? Li Ku Tan?" she repeated, winking at the other gleaners. "Where is that, little fellow?"

"I don't know," they both said together, ready to cry.

"You're lost then," she said, trying to speak in a kindly voice.

"Yes," said Lo-Lo. "We got lost last night while we were chasing a hopper."

"Ho, ho, ho," laughed the gleaners. "Lost while chasing a hopper!"

"Won't you tell us the way to go?" said Ta-Ta, looking first at the old woman and then at the

others. "Which way is Li Ku Tan?"

"Don't know," they replied. "Never heard of it."

"Never heard of Li Ku Tan!" repeated Ta-Ta. "Why, it's a big village, has a bear show, a Punch and Judy show, and a beautiful temple."

All of them laughed at this, but said nothing.

"And we're so hungry," wailed Lo-Lo.

"And thirsty, too," added Ta-Ta. "We have not had a thing to eat since yesterday noon except wheat."

"Give the poor dears a crust," said the old woman at last, speaking to a boy at her side, "and a drink of water."

CHAPTER XIV

THE GLEANERS

LO-LO and Ta-Ta stopped crying, and took the crust of cornbread and the water. How good the dry bread tasted, and how very good the water! It seemed as if they had never eaten anything so sweet in all their lives, or drunk water that was so pleasant to their parched throats.

As the lost children were eating, they eyed the group around them with a look of wonder on their faces. There were four women, and ten boys, of all ages from seven to twelve. Some of the children wore no clothes, and

the others were dressed in rags. They seemed to be under the care of the oldest woman. All of them were playing. They pushed each other about and rolled over and over on the ground. Two of them had drawn on the smooth clay a sort of checkerboard. On this they used stones for men and were having a jolly game. Three of their friends were looking on and laughing.

“Those boys are my gleaners,” said the old woman to Lo-Lo and Ta-Ta. “All of them live with me in my nice little home over yonder.”

“She has a great many children,” thought Lo-Lo. “I wonder where they all sleep.” His

own parents had no children besides Lo-Lo.

When the two boys had finished eating they thanked the old woman for her kindness.

"We must be going," said Ta-Ta, "for we are surely a long way from home, if you have never heard of our village. It must be on the other side of this great field."

"No, there's no place by that name over there," she answered. "I know all of them. You had better stay and work with my boys to-day, and spend the night at my home. Perhaps to-morrow I can help you find your father."

CHAPTER XV

A FOOT-RACE

NOW Ta-Ta was willing to stay with the woman, for he thought it would be great fun to play with so many children, but Lo-Lo began to cry, "I want my mamma; I can't stay away any longer."

"What are you going to do if you leave us? You may have walked miles and miles through the wheat. There's no telling how far you are from home. That field there is the largest one in the whole country. It belongs to the richest man around here."

Now this woman was not really

very kind and good, and the wheat field was not really very large, but Lo-Lo and Ta-Ta believed all that she told them.

“Don’t you think you’d better stay?” she asked Lo-Lo once more.

“No, I must go right away, and if Ta-Ta won’t go with me, I shall go alone.”

Then he began to run down the road as fast as his little brown legs would carry him.

When the woman saw that Lo-Lo was not going to remain, she did not speak kindly any longer. “Here, Chu, you and Wang run after that boy and bring him back here. Don’t let him escape you. I need him to work for me in the wheat.”

When Ta-Ta heard this, he also began to run, but one of the boys seized him and threw him down on the ground so roughly that it hurt him badly.

Lo-Lo looked behind him and saw that Chu and Wang were quickly catching up with him. With a cry of terror he ran all the faster, but his short legs were no match for those of the older children. In another minute he felt a rude hand catch him by the cue. The second boy seized his arm. Lo-Lo was caught fast.

CHAPTER XVI

HARD AT WORK

HE squirmed and tugged for a few minutes, but it was useless. His captors led him back to the old woman.

“Here! take these baskets,” she said, scowling. She handed one basket to Lo-Lo and one to Ta-Ta. “You are my boys now, and must work with the others. You see it’s no use trying to get away from us. We are too many for you. Only do your work well, and I shall be good to you. You shall have plenty to eat and a good place to sleep.”

"But what about my mamma and papa?" cried Lo-Lo. "I must see them. I can't live without them."

"Oh, we shall see about that later," she answered. "Don't try to eat a plum until you have picked it."

Just then the man in charge of the wheat field gave a signal to the old woman.

"Now to your work," she shouted, and every boy ran to his task, Lo-Lo and Ta-Ta with the others. The women also shared in the labor.

It was a busy time. On the one side, the men pulling the grain; on the other, the women and children gathering the scattered stalks that had been left.

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At first Lo-Lo's eyes were so full of tears that it was hard for him to see. Later he tried to be brave, and thought that there must come a time soon when he could run away. So he did the best he knew how for his mistress, and she seemed to be well pleased with her new boy.

Lo-Lo wondered whether any of the boys were really her own sons. Perhaps all of them were being kept away from their parents as he was.

CHAPTER XVII

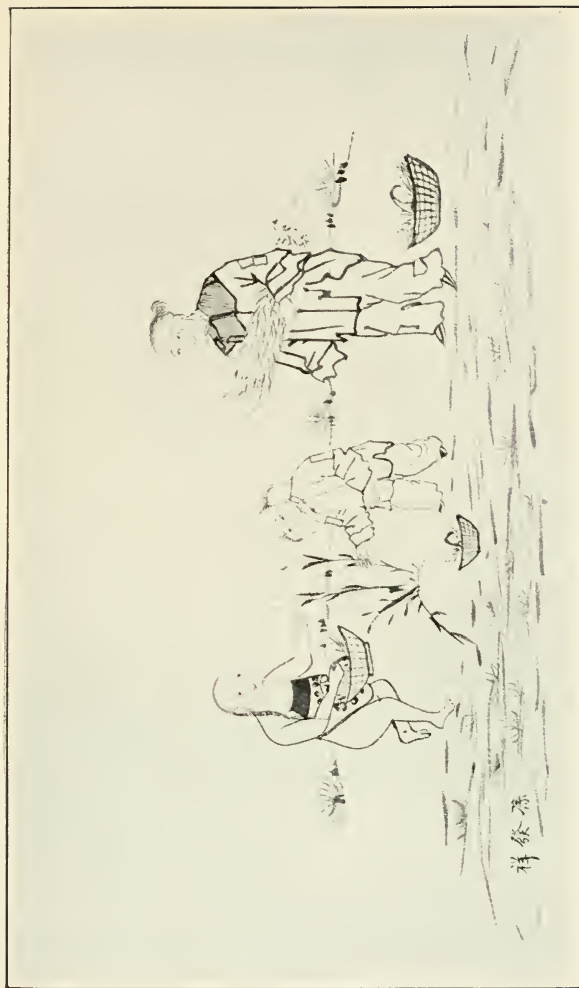
CHI SHI

ALL the morning, with hardly a minute's rest, he pulled the precious grain. It took a long while to fill his basket. It seemed as if his back would break.

"When the basket's full you'll get a rest," said the boy next to him.

This was good news to Lo-Lo. He had begun to fear that he would be held to his work all day long by the wicked woman. He now pulled much faster.

"What is your name?" he said



L O-LO, CHI SHI AND THE OLD WOMAN

at last to the boy who had been friendly.

"Chi Shi," replied the other, smiling.

"What a funny name! It means *seventy*, doesn't it?"

"Yes. You see my father was seventy years old when I was born."

"How came you with the old woman?" was Lo-Lo's next question.

"I was left an orphan when I was five years old, and there was no one to take care of me. So I fell into her hands and she has kept me ever since."

"Is she good to you?"

"Not very. We have to work hard always, and sometimes there is not much to eat. In wheat-

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pulling time we do not get home until after dark."

"Why don't you run away?" asked Lo-Lo. "If you don't belong to her, I should think it would be easy to slip off."

"But, you see, Wang and Chu are her own sons. They are bigger than the rest of us, and they keep a close watch; so do the other women who live with her. You see how soon they brought you back this morning when you started to run. Once I ran away, got clear out of sight too, but it wasn't an hour until they had found me. Such a beating as I got! I shall never forget it!"

CHAPTER XVIII

AT REST

BY this time Lo-Lo's basket was full. He carried it to his mistress.

"Very well," she said. "You have made a good start. Now you may lie down for a while."

Ta-Ta had not filled his basket, and Lo-Lo could see that he was very tired.

Several of the other boys were resting, and Lo-Lo wondered what would be done with the wheat that had been gathered. He did not have to wait long to find out. The three women

helpers each took two baskets and started off for the house.

“Don’t worry, boys,” said the old woman, laughing, to the six who were resting. “They will be back with empty baskets in a little while, and you will have something more to do.”

“Is this kind of thing to go on every day?” thought Lo-Lo. “From morning till noon, from noon till night, must I work for some one whom I have never seen before?” Alas! he saw no way of escaping. Still it was not quite so bad as being lost in the field and spending the night all alone without anything to eat or drink. At least he would not be allowed to starve, he would have Ta-Ta and Chi Shi to talk to,

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and perhaps some of the other boys would be friendly.

The old woman seemed to know what he was thinking about. "Oh, it is not so bad as it might be, is it, boys? Sometimes my stick feels hard when it hits you on the back, but then, that's your fault. If you don't like the feeling, do what I tell you, and do it at once."

CHAPTER XIX

THE QUARREL

WHEN Ta-Ta saw that Lo-Lo was resting, he worked very hard so that he, too, might rest. When he had filled his basket, he walked up to where Lo-Lo was lying flat upon his back. "Whew!" he said. "Isn't your back nearly broken?"

"Yes, and it's not near dinner time yet."

"Wish you hadn't had any old hopper anyway," said Ta-Ta, spitefully.

"But it was all your fault, our getting lost, Ta-Ta, and you know it. So you needn't blame me.

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You said we must take the hopper with us, and if we had left it at home all this trouble wouldn't have come."

"I said we must?"

"Yes. Don't you know I said we'd better leave it, and you didn't want to. You said you'd carry it, and it would be all right."

"Yes, but I didn't know your old cage was broken."

"It wasn't broken."

"It was."

"I say it wasn't."

"It was, and you're an old turtle anyway for talking that way."

To call any one a turtle in China is an insult, and in another minute the two boys were rolling over and over on the ground,

kicking and scratching, and pulling each other's hair.

The other boys who were resting gathered in a circle around the fighters and slyly jerked and pinched them whenever they had a chance.

Finally, when both were getting sadly bruised, the old woman saw the trouble. "Here! you good-for-nothings," she said, "what do you mean by wearing yourselves out in that way?" and she seized each one by the ear and pulled the boys apart. Then, after tying their cues together so close to their heads that neither could move without pulling his own hair, she bade them sit down and behave themselves in the right way.

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With tear-stained, dirty faces, the boys did as they were bidden, and until it was time to go to work again neither spoke a word to the other.

CHAPTER XX

THE PROMISE

ALL the rest of the day, except during the stop at the noon hour, they toiled at their gleaning, and only one or two things happened that are worth telling.

About four o'clock, as Lo-Lo was working near the road, he saw a man going by, leading a bear. "Oh, it's the bear from our village," he cried. "Now I can follow him and find my way home." He dropped the wheat he had in his hands and started to run out to meet the man. The old woman was at his side in an instant.



“HE SAW A MAN GOING BY, LEADING A BEAR”

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"Here, get to work!" she said. "This is no place for idlers. I'll show you the way to your home when the day's work is over. Never fear."

"Oh, thank you, thank you," cried Lo-Lo, throwing his arms about her. "You are so good to me. I'll work just as hard as ever I can to pay you back."

The old woman smiled a little when he said this, and patted him on the head.

Lo-Lo went back to his work.

From this time on he gathered more wheat than any of the other boys. Even if his back did ache, he was very happy, for he thought that soon he would see his mother and father again.

"They'll think I'm dead," he

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said to himself. "I wonder if they'll fire off any firecrackers and have the priests come and beat the drums at our house. Wouldn't it be funny? Perhaps by the time I get home they will have on white clothes for mourning. I hope they will be glad to see me back again, but I am afraid they will be angry because I have caused them so much worry."

CHAPTER XXI

LO-LO'S RABBIT

IT was just before dark, and the gleaners were almost ready to stop work for the night. All were tired and hungry, and Lo-Lo felt as if he could scarcely move.

All of a sudden a loud shout was heard, "A rabbit, a rabbit!" and in an instant all the boys forgot their tired limbs and aching backs.

There it was, running across the field—a young rabbit that had tried in vain to hide from the workers. How fast those tired boys did run! One would have

thought that they were just up from bed in the morning.

This way and that way dodged the trembling rabbit. Over and over again the cry, "I have it!" would be followed by another, "No, you missed it; there it goes. Quick, quick! head it off before it gets to the road. We'll never catch it if it gets out of the field."

The women looked on, laughing, while the men who were pulling wheat stopped to watch the fun. "Go it, boys!" they shouted, "Catch him, catch him!"

Now Lo-Lo and Ta-Ta were just as anxious as the others to catch the rabbit. What boy wouldn't enjoy such fun? Of course, if it had not been a young one, there would not have been

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much chance for the youthful hunters.

While Lo-Lo was running with all his might, he stumbled over a stone and fell. He was stunned by the fall and lay quite still. Just then the frightened little rabbit was coming toward him. When it saw the boy lying on the ground it darted up to him and ran inside his shirt, thinking, no doubt, that at last it had found a safe hiding-place.

Lo-Lo, seizing it with both hands, drew it out for the others to look at.

"The hopper boy has caught it," said the others. "It belongs to him."

"Well, if you did lose your hopper, you have a better pet in-

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stead," said Ta-Ta, coming up. These were the first words that had been spoken by the playmates since the quarrel, and both of them were now very happy.

CHAPTER XXII

TWILIGHT

IT was nearly dark, and as the tired gleaners walked slowly along the dusty road, Lo-Lo looked up at the old woman as much as to say, "Well, are you not going to keep your promise?" He clung to his rabbit, thinking how pleased his parents would be to see that, even if he had lost one pet, he had gained another.

Soon they arrived at a broken-down wall where an old gate hung loose upon its hinges. The boys and women filed into the yard, Lo-Lo and Ta-Ta among them.

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It was the dirtiest yard that Lo-Lo had ever seen; not at all like the place that he called home. The house was a tumble-down shack. The mud walls were crumbling to the ground.

All the boys but Ta-Ta and Lo-Lo gave a whoop of delight when they had set down their baskets.

Lo-Lo walked up to the old woman and stood near her, for he thought that now was the time when she would keep her promise.

"What are you waiting for?" she said sharply.

"For you to take me home," replied the trembling boy. "You know you said you would."

"Isn't this home, you little

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rascal? What are you talking about?"

"But I don't live in this dirty place," he cried, his eyes blazing.

"If it's good enough for the others, isn't it good enough for you? Sit down and hush your chatter, or I'll send you to bed without any supper. Just mind what I tell you. From now on, boy, this is your home and I am your mother."

"You, my mamma!" he faltered.

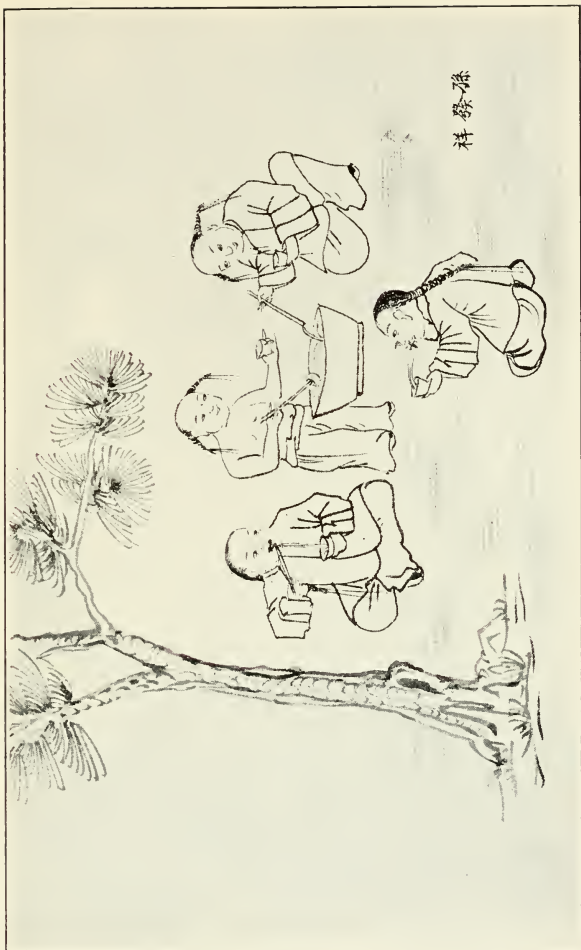
"Yes, I am your mamma from now on until you are grown up to be a man. Then you may go if you wish to, for I shall not care."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE NEW HOME

THAT night was the worst in Lo-Lo's life. When his new mistress told him that she was going to be his mother, he knew at once what this meant. She was going to keep him and Ta-Ta with her in spite of their wish to go home. No doubt she was one of those evil people of whom he had heard his father tell many stories. The boys were slaves by whose toil she made a living.

Supper was soon ready. A large dish of Chinese food was placed under a tree in the yard.



EATING SUPPER

Each boy was given a wooden bowl and a pair of chopsticks. Each one helped himself by taking food from the large dish with his chopsticks and putting it into his own bowl. A great deal of noise was made by the children in eating, for they did not cut their food into small pieces, as our well-bred children would have done, but sucked the long strips of pasty substance from the bowls to their mouths. As each one emptied his bowl, he refilled it from the large dish. The women ate of the same food, but they sat on the brick bed just inside the door.

When the dish was empty, Lo-Lo was still greedy for more, and so were the other boys, but there

was nothing to do but go to bed hungry. The main room had in it a large bed such as was described in another chapter. All of the boys stretched themselves on this bed wherever they could find places. As Lo-Lo and Ta-Ta were new boys, they did not fare well in this sharing of the bed. The others would not move an inch, and during the night they pushed and kicked the newcomers most unkindly.

CHAPTER XXIV

TWELVE ON A BED

THE bed was hard, and Lo-Lo's limbs ached in every joint. He had hoped there would be a chance at night for him to slip out of bed, snatch up his pet rabbit, and escape from the evil hands into which he had fallen. Much to his sorrow, the door was shut and bolted, and there was no way for him to get outside the house. The women were sleeping in a little room next to the large one, and Lo-Lo knew that they would hear him if he tried to break through the window.

After rolling and tossing for

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an hour or so, at last he closed his eyes in slumber. When he awoke, it was morning. Four of the boys had risen, and one or two others were rubbing their eyes as if they had just awaked.

Lo-Lo jumped off the bed and peeped out the door, which was now open. In the yard he saw some of the boys playing with his rabbit. He went outside.

"How do you like it here?" said Chi Shi, when he saw Lo-Lo coming.

"It's not at all like home," replied Lo-Lo, trying his best to smile, but making a failure.

"Wait till the old woman gives you a whipping, and then you won't laugh about it," added Chi

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Shi, with a meaning look at the other boys.

“You’re right about that,” they said.

One by one the late risers came to the door, and then into the small yard. It was still early in the morning, and they looked quite sleepy. Every one stepped up to have a look at the rabbit which Lo-Lo was holding in his arms.

“Let’s have a game of cue tag,” sang out one of the larger boys.

“All right, all right,” cried all the others in high glee.

Lo-Lo put down his pet, and got ready for the new game. As he had lived alone with his parents he had not learned many of the sports so dear to the hearts of most Chinese boys.

CHAPTER XXV

CUE TAG

ALMOST before he knew it, half a dozen boys had slapped Lo-Lo on the back. Some of the blows were hard ones and nearly knocked him down. Ta-Ta also received blows thick and fast from the other players in the game.

“What is this play?” thought Lo-Lo. “Is it just some trick of theirs to give them a chance to beat a new boy?”

“Here, you crazy,” shouted Chi Shi, “don’t you see how the rest of us are saving ourselves?”

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Pull your cue over your shoulder. As long as it hangs down your back, we have the right to beat you."

Sure enough, Lo-Lo looked, and saw that all of the others except Ta-Ta were holding their cues in front of them.

When all of the players were through laughing at Ta-Ta and Lo-Lo, the game began again in good earnest. Now the boldest of the runners would let their cues fall behind them on purpose, and when the others advanced to strike them, by artful dodging they would escape the beating.

Soon Lo-Lo enjoyed the new game as much as did the others. He was really very spry and nimble, and it was not often that

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any of the others caught him napping.

Once, when Chi Shi tripped and fell, half a dozen of the boys were on him in an instant, raining blows upon his body and limbs, for his cue had fallen under him.

Lo-Lo, seeing that his friend was faring badly, rushed up to help him. This he did by calling out, "See, my cue is behind." Thus he turned some of those beating Chi Shi against himself, and had to run his best to escape the blows they now aimed at him.

CHAPTER XXVI

A WHEELBARROW PEDLAR

BY the time the players had wearied of their sport, it was time to eat breakfast. A cake of p'ien p'ien, or hard corn-bread, which did not have to be eaten with chopsticks, was given to each of them. While they were busy eating this coarse dry food, a drumming noise was heard in the street.

"A barrow man," said Chi Shi, running to the gate and opening it a crack.

"No need of his prowling around here," growled the old

woman. "We haven't any money to be wasting on his trinkets."

Lo-Lo and Ta-Ta walked to the gate to get a peep at the merchant, although they had seen many such men before.

Outside was a wheelbarrow with a strong clumsy-looking wheel made of heavy timber. On it were a number of boxes. In these were stored the wares which the pedlar had for sale. One box was filled with bolts of cheap cloth; another contained many different grades of silks. Two of the boxes were fitted with small drawers which held buttons, thimbles, and odds and ends.

In one of these drawers was the pedlar's counting-frame. In China, instead of learning to add



THE WHEELBARROW MERCHANT



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and subtract numbers on paper as people do in other lands, many children are taught to do all sorts of sums on these little frames. Most of the frames have nine little rods of wood or wire on which are strung a number of wooden buttons. By snapping these buttons back and forth on the wires, they can do sums and other problems very quickly.

When the merchant found that nothing was wanted at the old woman's house he pushed on to the next gateway, and there sounded his drum so as to let the people know that he was ready to show them his goods.

"It must be hard work pushing that heavy load about all day long," observed Lo-Lo.

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“Yes,” said Chi Shi, “but he doesn’t have any old woman watching him, and he can lie down and rest whenever he feels like it.”

CHAPTER XXVII

ON THE STREET

IT was now time to start for the field, and each boy picked up his basket.

Lo-Lo, Ta-Ta, and Chi Shi walked close together in the road. There were no sidewalks in the narrow streets. Men, women, children, carts, mules, hogs, dogs — all passed along in the middle of the road. Sometimes in their hurry two men pushed into each other, but no one grew angry as a result. "No matter, no matter," each would say, and pass on.

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Many men were carrying things by means of long poles. They would balance these poles on their shoulders. From each end hung a basket, a jar, or a bucket. These were filled with cabbages, onions, or other things to eat. One of these carriers had a basket full of chickens attached to one end of his bender, while in the other basket a little girl was riding, perhaps taking her first trip to market.

"I think I should rather ride than carry," said Ta-Ta, pointing to this little scene.

"Yes, and it's easier than bumping through the streets in a clumsy cart," added Lo-Lo. "Let's call out to him; maybe he will give us a ride."

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But Lo-Lo was only joking. There was to be no riding for him that day, but work, hard work, such as he had had the day before.

The boys had nearly reached the end of the busy street when they saw crowds of people running and pushing their way toward an open space just inside the village wall.

“What is it?” said Lo-Lo.
“What can it be?”

All of the gleaners, children and women, were pushed along with the crowd.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SEEING A WHITE MAN

IT did not take them long to find out the cause of the uproar.

"A foreign man!" shouted some one.

"Where? Where?" asked all the boys, for it was hard for them to see over the heads of the men in front of them.

Soon they had pressed their way through the crowd and were able to have a good look at the strange sight.

"Why, it's not a man after all," said Lo-Lo.

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“How do you make that out?” asked Chi Shi.

“Don’t you see, he has on trousers, and he hasn’t any cue?”

“Trousers, you goose! Don’t you know that the men wear trousers instead of the women in the smaller countries?”

Once more the boys laughed at Lo-Lo, although several of them were just as much surprised as he. “My, how funny,” they thought, “for men to wear trousers!” for they were used to seeing all the men clothed in long, blue, dress-like garments.

“But why did he cut off his cue?” whispered Lo-Lo in an awed tone of voice.

“These foreign men don’t wear cues, Lo-Lo. They keep their hair

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cropped short, almost as short as our priests do here in China."

"Well, that's one good thing I've found out about them. I wish we didn't have to wear cues. They are always getting in the way, and they are so much trouble to take care of."

"Yes, and my papa told me once," put in Ta-Ta, "that the Chinese used to wear their hair short."

"What made them change their custom?"

"When our country was beaten by the Manchus, all our men were told to wear their hair long in a braid. This was to be a sign that our people were beaten. Ever since that time our men have worn cues."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WHITE MAN'S POCKET

LO-LO pressed up as close as he could get to the strange being. "He wears his vest under his coat instead of over it," he cried out in wonder, as he noticed this odd way of wearing a garment.

"Yes, my little friend," said the man, who seemed to know just what Lo-Lo was saying, and who spoke back in good Chinese, "that is the way we wear them in our country."

"And are those the kind of shoes you wear in your country?"

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asked Lo-Lo, getting over his first feeling of fear at the stranger.

"Yes, but they are not nearly so good as yours. They are so warm that sometimes I think I should like to follow your custom."

Now, as Lo-Lo was barefoot, the people around thought what the white man had said quite a joke, and all of them laughed, well pleased at his wit.

Lo-Lo was much surprised, on looking more closely at the man, to see that there were many holes in the sides of his garments, and also some inside of his coat.

"What are these for?" he said, touching one of the places with his finger.

The man laughed. "Why, bless my life!" he replied, "they

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are pockets, and they are to hold things for good little boys to eat." While he was talking, he slipped his hand into one of these pockets, and drew out a piece of candy.

"Here, try this," he said, handing it to Lo-Lo; "it is sweet, and I think you will like it."

Without asking any further questions, Lo-Lo clapped the candy into his mouth, and the crowd laughed to see the look of surprise and pleasure that shone all at once upon his face.

CHAPTER XXX

THE VILLAGE GATE

JUST then the stranger began to talk and the crowd grew quiet. Lo-Lo listened in wonder to the words that came from the man's lips. They were about such strange things that he did not know what they meant.

All of a sudden he felt a jerk of the cue, and, turning, saw that the old woman was ready to start on, and was waiting for her helpers.

How hard it was for him to leave the side of this odd-looking man who had spoken to him so

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kindly ! The lump of sugar that the man had given him was the sweetest, best food he had ever tasted.

“If I could eat such things as that all the time,” he said to Ta-Ta a little later, when they were talking about the man whom they had just seen, “I should be happy all my life.”

“Even if you had to pull wheat for the old woman?” asked Ta-Ta.

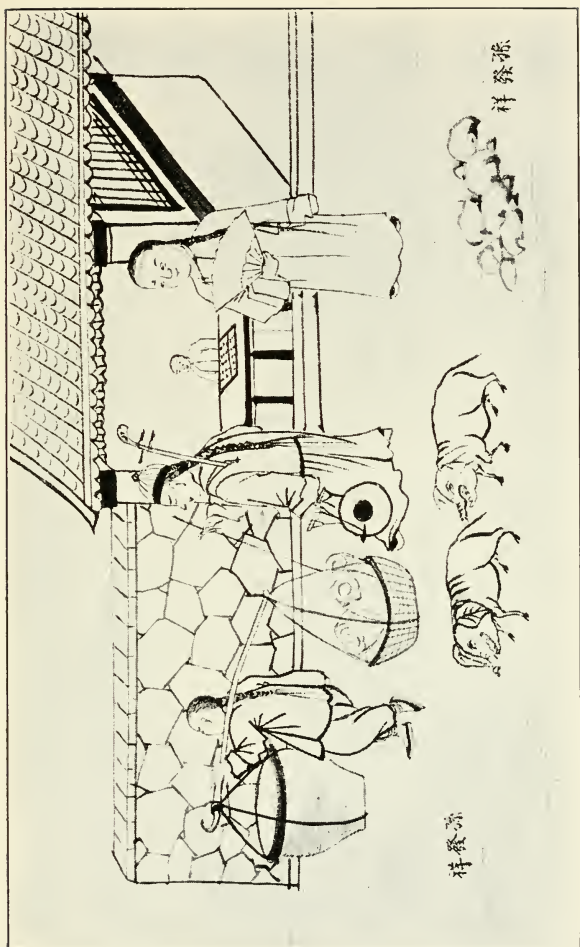
“Yes, even if I had to pull wheat. But of course I should want to see my mamma just the same, for a sweet taste in my mouth would not take the place of that.”

The party of workers had now reached the wall of the village

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and were ready to go through the gate into the open fields beyond.

This old gate was a clumsy affair made of iron, and was closed every night about nine o'clock. People inside the town could not go out after that hour, and those on the outside could not get in.



A STREET SCENE IN CHINA

A

CHAPTER XXXI

THE OLD WOMAN TALKS

“**B**BETTER have nothing to do with those white men,” said the old woman, stepping up close to Lo-Lo as they walked through the gate.

“Why not?” he asked.

“Oh, they are very wicked, and do all sorts of mean things. They can’t be trusted.”

“They can’t be much worse than you are,” said Lo-Lo to himself, thinking how badly this woman had treated him in keeping him away from home. “What do they do that is mean?” he said

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aloud, looking into her wrinkled face.

"Oh, poison people, and sometimes, I am told, put poison into the wells so that everybody who drinks the water will die. What was it that the man gave you to eat?"

"Just a piece of sugar."

"Did it taste queer?"

"No, it was better than anything else I ever tasted."

"Very likely it was poisoned, and you will die," she said with a laugh. "That's what they come to our country for, to kill as many of us as they can. There's a white man lives over at Tung Chow, who has a deep hole in the ground. Whenever Chinese boys go inside his yard, he throws

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them into the hole and kills them. Sometimes he throws women in, too."

Lo-Lo listened in wonder to the strange words of the old woman. The man had looked so kind and good that Lo-Lo could not believe there was anything wrong with him. "Well, I am not afraid he poisoned me," he said stoutly, "and I would eat some more of that candy now if I had the chance."

"Then you think better of his word than you do of mine, eh?" said the woman harshly. "I'll remember that, youngster. You had better be careful what you say, for I never forget."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE BIRD THAT DID TRICKS

THEY were now near the wheat fields, when they saw by the side of the road a man holding a strange-looking bird. The bird was not fastened by cord or chain, and yet it sat on its master's finger, looking up into his face as if waiting for him to speak.

When the gleaners had all come up to the man, Ta-Ta said to him, "What kind of a bird is that?"

"A trick bird."

"What can he do?"

"Have you money?" said the

man, eyeing Ta-Ta, Lo-Lo, and the others closely. "How can you expect me to show you his tricks unless you give me a coin?"

"We are poor gleaners," spoke up the old woman, "and have no money, but if you would like to do a good deed, show us what your trick bird can do. Sometime we may be able to repay you for your kindness." The woman spoke in her gentlest tone, and the man consented to do what she had asked.

"Well, since that is the case, I suppose I ought to show you one trick free of charge. Just stand back a little."

The children made a larger circle. Then the bird man with a flip of his finger threw a grain of

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corn high into the air. "Fetch," said he. Before the word was finished, the bird had darted from its perch, and in another instant the kernel of corn was in its mouth, and it had returned quickly to its master's finger.

"Good, good!" shouted the children. "Do it again."

The man smiled, and made the bird perform the trick once more.

"That little bird makes me a living," he said at last, "but I shouldn't earn much if I didn't show it to anybody but gleaners."

CHAPTER XXXIII

COUNTRY SCENES

“**W**HY, just look at that place where we were gleaning yesterday,” said Lo-Lo to Chi Shi. “They are plowing it up already and getting it in shape to plant something.”

“Corn,” replied Chi Shi. “As soon as the wheat is pulled they plow up the ground and sow the corn. The crop is ready to harvest in autumn, and then it is time to sow the wheat again.”

The plows were rude-looking things made of the limbs of trees cut to the proper length, and fitted together so as to hold in place

a small three-edged steel blade. One man was pulling the plow while another was guiding it.

"How should you like to play mule, Ta-Ta?" asked Lo-Lo.

"You be the mule, and I'll guide the plow; that will be better," laughed Ta-Ta.

In one part of the field that was already plowed, a man was dragging the upturned soil with a sort of rough, wooden harrow.

"Look at that bride over yonder on the threshing-floor," said Lo-Lo. "See, she is going to help her husband with the wheat."

Lo-Lo knew that the woman was a bride because she was dressed in red garments.

As they came even with the threshing-floor, a large watch-dog

rushed out at the gleaners and sent the boys and women scurrying in every way.

“He thinks you have come to steal my wheat,” observed the man as he called his dog off. “He’s a pretty good judge of people, too.”

The old woman scowled at the man, but said nothing.

“Are all those boys your children?” asked the man, pointing to the band of gleaners.

“Yes, every one,” she replied, “my dear children.”

CHAPTER XXXIV

A THRESHING-FLOOR

THE threshing-floor was a large open space near the wheat field. The ground was as hard as a clay tennis court.

"How did he make the floor so hard?" asked Lo-Lo.

"Don't you know?" said Chi Shi. "It's this way. Before beginning to beat out the grain, he swept off all the dirt and gravel, and sprinkled water on the ground. After this he rolled it with a heavy stone roller. In this way he made it very hard, just as you see it there."

"Yes, it's cleaner than the

floor of any house I have ever seen."

"Of course it is. What would be the use of having the floor of a house clean? Are you crazy again, Lo-Lo?"

Just then the man threw some of his wheat on the floor. He picked up a long stick which had small pieces of wood fastened loosely to the end of it. By swinging this flail over his head, and bringing it down with great strength upon the wheat, he pounded out the grain from the husks, and thus threshed his wheat.

In our country many of the children are used to seeing large engines and machines for threshing wheat. They would be much

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amused if they should see the Chinese farmer beating out all his grain by hand.

Lo-Lo enjoyed this scene also, for he had lived in a village where there were but few threshing-floors, and he had not seen much of this kind of labor.

After the grain is beaten out of the husk, the farmers throw great bunches of the mixed chaff and wheat into the air. The wind blows the chaff away, and the wheat falls back upon the ground. By night-time great piles of wheat are to be seen on the threshing-floors.



祥泰源

THRESHING THE WHEAT

CHAPTER XXXV

AT WORK AGAIN

“**H**URRY up there, you lazy loafers! Don’t you see how high the sun is?” It was the old woman speaking to the children. “We haven’t time to stop and look at everything we see along the road.”

Now the old woman liked to rest just as well as the boys did, but when she was ready to start, she always liked to put the blame for the idle moments on the boys.

“There is a good field over yonder where there are no gleaners,” she said, pointing to a spot

where the men were pulling the ripe grain.

"In another minute we shall all be hard at work again," thought poor Lo-Lo. "I wonder if it will be this way every day until I am a man."

"Listen," said the owner of the field to the old woman. "You may have all the left-over grain that you and your tribe can find, but, let me tell you, there won't be much this year. The weather has been so dry, my crop is almost burned up, and I can't spare much to the poor."

All now began to work once more. Lo-Lo found that his back was very lame from his labor of the day before.

The man told the truth when

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he said he would not leave much for the gleaners. The stalks which he and his helpers had left unpulled were few and far between.

Soon the old woman was in a bad humor with the owner of the field. "He's too stingy," she said, "to live, but I'll show him a trick or two before the day is over, to pay him back for trying to cheat us poor people out of our rightful share."

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE GLEANERS TURN THIEVES

LO-LO wondered what his mistress had meant by showing the man a trick or two, but later in the day he found out for himself.

When the grain was all pulled and tied in bundles, a two-wheeled cart was brought into the field. The men loaded this with great care, packing the bundles closely so that there would be no danger of their falling off by the way-side.

All this time the old woman was watching the cart out of the corners of her eyes. When the

cart was loaded, every bundle of wheat had been picked up from the ground. Then the owner of the field and all the other hands except the driver, a boy, started off to pull the wheat in another field not far away.

Before the men were out of sight the four women walked up to the cart. Two of them placed themselves behind and the others to one side.

"Give us a little of your grain," shouted the old woman to the driver who had climbed to his place on the cart and seized the line.

"Can't do it," said he, without turning. "It's not mine."

All this time the women were pulling out bundles and throw-

CHINESE PLAYMATES

ing them back to the boys in the rear.

“Here, you thieves!” shouted the driver, “what are you doing there?”

The two women whom he had noticed stopped their stealing at once, but those whom he could not see continued to help themselves. One of them threw a bundle to Lo-Lo, but he hurled it back to the top of the cart, saying at the top of his voice, “No, I’ll glean for you, but you can’t make me steal.”



STEALING WHEAT FROM THE CART

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE OLD WOMAN PUNISHED

THE driver, hearing these words, turned and saw what was going on. "You pack of thieves!" he cried, "I'll teach you what it means to steal from this cart." With a flourish of his whip, he sprang to the ground.

When the women saw that he was really in earnest, each one grabbed a last bundle, and then, followed by the children, they scattered and ran in hot haste across the field. The other men, hearing the noise, turned back to help the driver.

At this point the two horses,

growing frightened at the noise about them, jerked the cart around so suddenly that the old woman, who had stopped a moment to pick up a bundle, barely escaped being run over.

"Crack, crack!" went the driver's whip, and the lash fell upon her back, giving her a stinging blow. "Now, thief," he cried, "perhaps you'll know enough not to steal next time. What kind of woman are you, to steal, after a man has given you gleanings? Worthless beggar! Next time we'll gather every straw for our own use."

"You didn't leave enough to call a gleanings," she replied sharply. "When a man is as stingy as your people are, he

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deserves to have all his grain stolen."

"No more of that talk!" he said, raising his whip once more. "Do you see that policeman coming? I'll have him take the last one of you to the lock-up if you don't clear out of this field in one minute's time."

"All the others have cleared," said the old woman, "but you can't make me go until I please."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

LO-LO'S ESCAPE

DURING this exciting time, Lo-Lo had been making good use of his chance to escape from the old woman's clutches.

"If I don't get away now, I may have to work for her as long as I live, and I'll never see my mamma again." All this he said to himself as he ran.

His legs moved as they had never moved before. He forgot, for the time, that he was tired. He thought only of escape, of the dear, dear little mud house that he called home, of the kind mother and father

who had been so good to him, and who would he so glad to see him back once more.

On and on he ran, never once turning back to see what was happening. Every minute he was afraid he would feel the hands of Chu and Wang pulling at his cue. They had caught him once before, and now, oh, what if they should catch him again!

Out of the first field he ran, down a bank, across the road, and into another field from which the grain was just being gathered. "I'll hide over there in the wheat that hasn't been cut," was his thought as his fat legs twinkled over the stubble. "Surely these other men will not try to stop me."

CHINESE PLAYMATES

One minute more and he would have been safely hidden in the standing grain, but just at that very time of safety a man, who had been watching him closely, stepped up to one side and seized him by the shirt.

With a scream of terror Lo-Lo tried to jerk away, but the other now held him in a tight embrace, and instead of speaking to him in a harsh voice, bent over and spoke to him by name.

CHAPTER XXXIX

LO-LO'S FATHER

WHAT was Lo-Lo's amazement on looking up to see that it was his own father who had stopped him!

"Papa, papa," he cried, a great joy swelling up in his breast, "why, where did you come from?"

"I was just about to ask you the same question," replied the elder.

Just then two boys came running across the field. They were Chu and Wang, who had been sent out to catch Lo-Lo.

"Come along," they said, when

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they saw Lo-Lo talking to his father. "It is time to go on. You'd better step lively or you'll get a beating, for the old woman is mad this time."

"What's that?" said the father, taking one of the boys by the arm.

"I'll tell you. You needn't ask them," said Lo-Lo, bursting into tears. "There's a mean old woman that steals children and makes them work for her all day long in the wheat field. She stole me and wouldn't let me go home to you and mamma. Just now, when she was stealing wheat, I ran away from her, but she still has Ta-Ta. There they are yonder in the road."

"Still has Ta-Ta, you say? I'll go over and look into this

matter," said the father, starting off swiftly towards the group that Lo-Lo had pointed out.

When Lo-Lo's father reached the road, Ta-Ta saw him and came running up. "Oh, please take me home," he implored; "I want to go home too; I want to go home."

By this time the policeman, whom the driver had seen coming, was on the scene. Lo-Lo's father explained matters to him fully, and soon the old woman and her helpers were marched off towards the jail, while Lo-Lo, Ta-Ta, and the happy father started off for home.

Lo-Lo gave a hurried account to his father of all that had led up to his escape.

CHINESE PLAYMATES

“You see, my boy,” said his father, when he had finished, “it was because you were a good boy and would not steal that you are now free again and on your way home to your mamma.”

“Yes,” said Lo-Lo, “that’s so.”

CHAPTER XL

THE WAY IT TURNED OUT

OH, what a happy home-going that was! The boys rattled off their story as fast as they could tell it, and a long story it was, of their hunt for the weeds, the search for the hopper, the night in the wheat, their meeting with the old woman, but then, it need not be gone over here, for you know it already.

When they reached Lo-Lo's gate, his mother, hearing his well-known voice, came running out to clasp him in her arms. The father went home with Ta-

Ta to explain things to the latter's parents.

How good it was for Lo-Lo to be home again, and how kind his parents were to him. That night they treated him as if he were a little prince, and they didn't scold him at all for not doing just as he had been told, for they felt that he had been punished enough already.

"We shall have to thank the Kitchen God for bringing you back to us," said the happy mother.

"Yes, that's right," agreed the father. "But tell us, Lo-Lo, what was the strangest thing you saw during the time you were away from us."

Lo-Lo did not have to think



THE KITCHEN GOD

long before replying, "Why, that white man, of course, but the old woman told me that he would just as soon poison me as not."

"I'd rather trust him than the old woman," said the father warmly.

The next morning when the judge heard the story of the old woman, he ordered that she and each of her grown helpers be given two hundred blows with the whip, and that for a hundred days they should be kept shut up like animals in an open cage just outside the door of the jail. Some of the children whom they had stolen were restored to their parents, and the others were placed in a school where they would be taught to read and write.

CHAPTER XLI

A POSTSCRIPT

LATE in the afternoon of the day following the escape of the lost boys, Ta-Ta came to see Lo-Lo. In his hand he held a tiny case.

"What is it," said Lo-Lo, "that you have in your hand?"

"Guess," said Ta-Ta, hiding his hand behind his back.

"I give it up," said Lo-Lo, after he had made many failures to guess right.

"It's a singing hopper, and it's for you," answered Ta-Ta, looking foolish.

"But why do you give it to

me?" asked Lo-Lo, much surprised.

"Because it was all my fault that you lost yours. I made you take it when you did not want to, and then while I was carrying it, one of the bars in the cage slipped out of place. I couldn't get it back the way it belonged, and when we were pulling weeds the hopper squeezed through. While we were hunting in the wheat I put the bar back in place and didn't tell you anything about the way your pet got out. So to-day I have brought you another, and here it is."

"Oh, thank you, thank you," said Lo-Lo warmly; "this is much better than having a rabbit for a pet, isn't it?"

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Just then the grasshopper began to sing at the top of his voice.

“Why, it makes a louder noise than the other one could, and now I’m glad that the first one got away.”

The End.

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